



# A Summer Night's Wish



fantasy

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## Chapter 1 by Alice Marie Bride

It was a night said to only occur once in a lifetime, if you were lucky. A night where the witches played, werewolves walked unafraid, and vampires stalked and killed mercilessly. These were all just childhood stories, much like Halloween.

Or so we thought. The Summer Solstice was approaching quickly, just another day in the year marking the change of a season. But this year, there was nervous talk amongst the elderly, they seemed afraid. Even my Nan, a woman I had never seen be afraid, was anxious.

I sat down at the table as I did every morning, hair in a mess and ripe with morning breath.

"Nan?"

She angled her front towards me, a bundle of stark white curls piled up on her head. She looked over her horn-rimmed glasses, and frowned a little.

"Yes, Eliza?"

I took in a deep breath, unsure of what I should ask.

"Why are so many people so nervous about the Solstice?"

She set down the pan of biscuits she was holding, and wiped her hands on her apron.

"It's going to be a full moon, on the Solstice. This hasn't happened in over 70 years, and

hopefully won't happen again for a long time.

"Hopefully?"

"Yes, Eliza, it's time for me to tell you something."

I was a bit nervous, she had

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"Eliza, you know how when you were a child, and all of the stories of monsters and things in the dark?"

I nodded slowly.

"Eliza.." she took a deep breath in, and opened her mouth to speak again, but before she could utter a word, there was a sharp rap at the screen door.

She couldn't have looked more relieved as she gave me a final glance and rushed out of the arched doorway, calling cheerily. I sat at the table, smoothing out my mess of knots in my hair. I could hear Nan talking, but couldn't understand what she was saying. I was too tired to try and listen in, so I trudged back upstairs, stubbing my toe along the way.

I was walking along the street, auburn mess now tamed and kept back with a simple braid, garbed in all black, as always. I was still concerned with why Nan looked so worried, and what she was going to tell me. Monsters? What could she mean? Before I had anymore time to think about it, I heard a loud squeak and stopped dead in my tracks. There wasn't anything around but a hot asphalt road and a grove of spread out Oaks, so it wasn't easy to pinpoint where the noise came from. There was a small brown blur at the edge of the grove, on the other side. It flitted back and forth, squealing and tearing up the leaves. Somehow, I knew it was a squirrel. I didn't think anything of it as I continued walking, school books in hand. After a while I felt a burst of energy, and had a strange urge to run. To run and run, and never slow down.

I trotted the last mile to the old brick house building, with sleepy people trudging around and a few kids running to get out of the wet morning dew. I didn't feel winded in the slightest.

*Maybe all this walking is paying off.*

The morning past by in a blur, my time consumed with a great hunger. I wanted to eat and eat and eat, and almost nothing else. Leafy greens, sweet, juicy, leafy greens... My distracted state was broken as the teacher started tapping on my desk, her face a little too close to mine. I blinked several times before her features came into focus- she was a younger woman, but had yellowed teeth and a crooked smile.

"Miss Elizabeth? Miss Elizabeth?"

"Hm yes?!?" I looked away a bit in embarrassment, and to my surprise no one else was in the

room.

"You've been staring out in space for five minutes ago." She cleared her throat and tapped my desk. I mumbled my apologies and rushed out of the room. I was more popular in the school.

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"Oh, I'm so sorry.." I mumbled as I looked up.

"Try and watch where you're going next time. I don't have time for bump ins like this, I have some... important.. business to take care of." He winked and glanced towards the classroom. I felt an uneasy pang in my gut.

"John? What do you mean?"

"Don't worry about it, and forgot you saw me here, alright?" He strode down the hallway, a smirk on his face. I hid around the corner until he closed the door behind him and I heard muffled talking.

I speed walked through the dirty hallways to the cafeteria, stomach practically roaring at me. The heavy smell of meat punched me in the face, and made me stagger backwards. I felt sick. I refrained from pinching my nose as I weaved through the idle throng of people, desperate to get some salade. Luckily, no one ever touched the salad stuff, so I got to have as much as I wanted. I got three bowls stuffed with assorted greens and carrots- my favourite thing to eat. But today, I was extra hungry. I sat down by myself as I usually did, and scarfed down my salads as I read "The tales of a Red Knight," a story my mom had written before she disappeared. I must have read it a thousand times, but every time I read it, it seems like something changes. The rest of the day went by painfully slow- I needed to get out, to run. The minutes that ticked by felt like hours, and I was utterly bored. When it was time to go home, I walked briskly out of site of the school, then ran with reckless abandon, over halfway home. A loud noise startled me, bringing me to a grinding halt. I was by the grove again. I stood perfectly still, listening intently. There was a rather loud squeak and I jumped, running a few feet before turning around to see what it was. It was a little brown squirrel. It stared at me, unblinkingly.

I eased away, backing up, before trotting the rest of the way home. I was wide eyed and my hair was windblown, and I stood, just gazing at the small house. It was definitely a house for two, a tiny two story beige house, with a pointed rooftop. There was a giant rolling field behind the house, a field that I had been out in many times, reading. I strode through the door, and to my surprise was home alone. I tossed my bag in the corner, and cleaned the little mess Nan had left in the kitchen.

Nan never left messes..

I got a little worried, and just about at that time, the phone was breaking the silence. I squealed and leaped across the room in two seconds, and was out of the little table.

"Hi-hello?"

"Eliza?"

"Oh Nan! Where are you?"

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"Just.. just in town. Listen, I want you to stay home tonight. Do you understand?" I was very worried now, but just nodded to myself and mumbled reassurances to her.

"Please Eliza. And no matter what happens, don't go outside."

It was dusk, and Nan still wasn't home. Her words rang through my head. "...And no matter what happens, don't go outside." They played on a constant loop. The moon was just peaking over the mountain line, and I couldn't stand it anymore. I darted out the backdoor, out to the field, much like I did on many nights. I had a special place in the woods that I stumbled across, that on full mooned nights, was lit up like it was almost day time. The trek seemed different this time, like it was overgrown, like trees were reaching out to me. The sky was lit up in a brilliance of colours, the likes of which I had never seen before. Purples, greens, blues.. It was like a supernova had went off overhead. I felt a strange and painful rush sear through my body, and I fell to the ground, writhing and curling up in a ball. There was a howling that ripped the night, and I saw many figures emerging. Tall and beastlike... short and fat. I heard Nan's voice before I blacked out-

"Stupid girl. Now you're cursed like the rest of us."

I looked up, and saw her face staring down at me, but she was much taller.

"Elizabeth.... you are a centaur."

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